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## Library Marketing and Communications (Full Issue)

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ON THE COVER:

*Michaela Giunchigliani, student social media coordinator with University of Oregon Libraries, frames a shot for a promotional video.*  
*Photograph by Lesli Larson.*



## Upcoming Issue

Spring 2016

*Access Services in the  
New Century*

# Library Marketing and Communications

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JOAN PETTIT  
*OLAQ Guest Editor*

Joan is an associate professor and Communications and Outreach Librarian at Portland State University. She earned her MSLS and BA degrees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; she also holds an MA in English from Western Carolina University. Before becoming a librarian, Joan worked at Nantahala Outdoor Center, an outdoor recreation outfitter in western North Carolina, where she held jobs ranging from raft guide and kayak instructor to reservations office floor manager to editor and marketing manager. She will be on sabbatical during the 2016–17 academic year and will spend 10 months in Ethiopia as a Fulbright Scholar. Contact Joan at: [jpetit@pdx.edu](mailto:jpetit@pdx.edu)

## Introduction

Oregon libraries provide an incredible array of resources and services, but sometimes we struggle to educate our users and each other about all that is available. Over the past several years, many libraries have become more intentional in our efforts to market and promote our offerings, through traditional PR and advertisements as well as newer approaches like social media. However, we may lack the formal training and expertise to do this well—marketing is not a class offered in all library school programs—and, even with appropriate training, we may lack the budget and staff to implement a large-scale marketing program.

This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* focuses on library marketing and communications in Oregon libraries. As the Communications and Outreach Librarian at Portland State, I was curious to know how libraries in Oregon are tackling these issues. How are we learning new skills and approaches to communicating with stakeholders? What has worked, and what hasn't? What's changed over the past few decades? Who are our audiences and how do we best communicate with them?

To begin to answer these questions, we have excellent contributions from writers at large and small public and academic libraries throughout Oregon, and beyond.

Fundraising is an increasingly important part of library budgets. Portland State University Library Dean Marilyn Moody focuses on communications with donors, from cultivating and stewarding relationships to understanding their interest in your library. These relationships can last decades and provide great value both to the library and the donor.

Kate Lasky from Josephine Community Libraries writes about the foundations for success in marketing: branding and an integrated communications plan. Even with a small budget, consistency in branding can lead to more effective results.

Washington County Cooperative Library Services garnered significant community support with the successful passage of a library services levy in November 2015. Ross Fuqua

OLAQ

discusses the complex situation for the library, which, bound by Oregon election laws, could share information about the proposed levy but not advocate a position. The number and diversity of libraries in WCCLS made this even more challenging.

Paula Walker from Tigard Library reflects on a similar effort in 2002, when Tigard voters supported the construction of a new library building. Much has changed in 14 years, and this article provides an excellent overview of those changes. Similarly, Diane Sotak discusses the evolution of her role at the library at the University of Portland. In 2002, she initiated marketing efforts by focusing on the somewhat “haphazard” promotion of library services according to the academic year calendar; more recently, she has shifted to longer-term, strategic planning.

The University of Oregon Libraries has a new marketing team. Lesli Larson, Jason Stone, and Mandi Garcia share how they came together as a centralized communications department as well as some of the excellent projects and campaigns they have implemented over the past two years. In the following article, their colleagues Tatiana Bryant and Jonathan O. Cain write about engaging the campus and local communities through diverse public programs.

One of our out-of-state contributors, Clarissa Mansfield from Western Washington University, writes about the value of stories in library marketing. She offers several excellent examples of how we can “show” rather than “tell” what’s happening in our libraries.

While our communication efforts often focus on external audiences, especially patrons and donors, Shawn Cunningham at Multnomah County Library reminds us of the importance of internal communications. We should be as mindful of communicating with colleagues as we are about communicating with users. Multnomah County Library recently filled a position focused on internal communications, and Shawn shares some early lessons.

The final article in this issue draws from a 2014 OLA Conference presentation. Rajesh Singh, assistant professor of library and information science at St. John’s University in New York, presented on and now writes about brand advocacy and content marketing for libraries.

We are pleased to have such a compelling range of contributors to this issue of *OLA Quarterly*. As libraries, we are still learning how best to communicate with our stakeholders. I hope this issue helps us learn from each other.

Finally, I would be remiss not to take a moment to thank *OLA Quarterly* Coordinator Charles Wood, whose patience, persistence, and attention to detail are greatly appreciated.





# Communicating with Library Donors

by Marilyn K. Moody

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MARILYN K. MOODY

Marilyn is the Dean of the University Library and Professor at Portland State University, a position she has held since 2012. As Dean, she provides leadership for a vibrant 21st century library supporting research, teaching, and learning at Portland State University. Moody's professional interests include academic library administration, mobile learning, open educational resources (OER), textbook affordability, institutional repository services, government information, and scholarly communications. Moody has published and presented on a broad range of topics. She is the co-author with Jean L. Sears of three editions of the reference work *Using Government Information Sources*. Moody has a Bachelor of Arts in Teaching of Social Studies and a Master of Science in Library Science from the University of Illinois.

## Introduction

How do you communicate effectively with donors and potential donors? What does that communication look like? Libraries often envision donor communications as including only direct fundraising requests. Communications with donors, however, encompass a wide range of activities, is ongoing, and may even span decades with an individual donor. Library staff not directly involved with fundraising may not even think about donors as part of their user audience, but almost everyone who works in a library has a potential role in communicating with donors. Think, for example, about the potential impact of the message donors receive when viewing a library's website or in reading an online news item about a library's successful program.

*As Crumpton (2012) wrote:*

Library Administration including Development Officers, Fundraisers and Campaigners need the support of everyone in the library to help meet the goals of fundraising and development activities. Although the majority of staff might believe that they have minimum exposure to donors or potential donors, the impact of staff can be significant. A thorough understanding of development activities and a good stewardship of the organization's assets, goals and objectives as well as the reputation and character of the libraries', can all be impacted by staff in their daily routines and actions. (p. 30)

In this article, I'll briefly describe the essentials for understanding the development process and touch on basic donor communications strategies applicable to any Oregon library and any library staff who have contact with donors. I strongly believe the most important aspect of working with donors is developing a strong relationship with the donor—communicating effectively and consistently is an important part of developing that relationship. As part of your communication strategy, take advantage of opportunities to convey to donors the great things happening in your library. This is an important way to create and maintain these strong and positive donor relationships.



Communications targeted specifically to individual donors take on many different forms: talking face-to-face, phone calls, texting, e-mailing, and a wide range of formal and informal written communications. Communicating with donors might use such varied items as a casual conversation over coffee, thank you notes, fundraising proposals, news items (including e-formats, social media, and print communications), or ongoing e-mail conversations.

### The Development Process

It is helpful to understand a few basic development/fundraising concepts when interacting with donors. Knowing what you are trying to accomplish and what stage your donor may be at in the development process are important considerations. This does not need to be a complicated analysis, but it should be a thoughtful one. It influences how you tailor your communications as well as helping to shape the method of the communication.

Some of the major aspects of the fundraising process for libraries are research, cultivation, solicitation, and recognition (Wedgeworth, 2000, p. 538). Another stage of the process often included as a separate stage is stewardship. For our purposes, let's describe these development stages as:

- **Identifying Donors** (research about donors)
- **Cultivation** (developing the relationship with a donor)
- **Asking Donors to Give** (solicitation)
- **Thanking and Acknowledging Donors** (recognition)
- **Stewardship** (ongoing maintenance of the relationship with a donor; may also include recognition)

Your communication efforts may be more general in approach or specifically aimed at donors in one stage of this process. For example, when thanking and acknowledging donors, you might consider the following questions:

What do you know about the donor and how might you match the “thank you” to their preferences? Is a hand-written note most desirable? A formal letter of thanks? E-mails, text messages, or phone calls? Public recognition on a library donor list? An invitation to a special event or experience communicated as a thank you? In the case of a major gift, is there a naming opportunity for an endowed fund or a physical space in the library? Is that meaningful to the donor?

### What are the Major Types of Giving from Individual Donors?

In thinking about individual donors, some of the most common giving categories include annual giving, planned giving, major gifts, and gifts-in-kind. Understanding the different types of giving helps to devise communication best suited to each one of these categories of giving.

- **Annual Giving**—Annual giving is, as it sounds, giving that is meant to be a part of an annual or periodic cycle. Annual giving helps libraries identify donors, stay connected with their donors, provides the opportunity for repeat giving and encourages donors to consider larger gifts or planned giving opportunities. (CASE, 2013a.)



- **Planned Giving**—Planned giving takes on various forms, with one of the basics being a bequest (a charitable gift from an estate). A variety of other ways of making planned gifts include such financial vehicles as annuities, trusts, IRA Charitable Rollovers and charitable gift annuities. (Portland State University Foundation, n.d.)
- **Major Gifts**—The definition of what level of giving is defined as a major gift will vary from library to library. Typically, a gift larger than a certain amount is identified as a major gift and donors who have the potential financial capacity, organizational affinity, and interest to give at that level will be considered as potential major gift donors. (CASE, 2013b.)
- **Gifts-in-Kind**—Gifts-in-kind are non-cash gifts of physical property. For libraries, the donation of books is one common form of gifts-in-kind, but gifts-in-kind might include the gift of such items as artwork, equipment, furniture, or other tangible personal property. (Portland State University. University Financial Services, n.d.)

Match your communication to the type of giving you're seeking. A written general appeal to donors for an annual gift campaign looks different than talking one-on-one to a donor interested in planned giving. A proposal for a major gift from a donor who has made annual gifts for the last five years has different aims than a social media campaign for first-time donors.

### Develop Key Library Messages and Elevator Speeches

One useful approach to donor communication is to think about and develop key library messages for your library. A few examples of key donor-oriented messages used at Portland State University Library include:

- When you support the Library, you're supporting PSU.
- The Library Fund helps us maintain our role as **the center of an engaged urban campus**. We listen to our students and make changes to spaces, offer new services, and purchase new books based on their feedback. I work with our faculty and staff to prioritize special or critical projects for the year, and the Library Fund gives us the flexibility to make those ideas a reality.
- The Library collects books, journals and other materials in every PSU discipline and beyond—from computer science and engineering to art history and contemporary Middle East literature. Subject librarians develop expertise in all of these areas and beyond.
- Library holdings tell the story of Portland and Oregon, through University Archives, special collections, and faculty and student scholarship.

Do you have a donor “elevator speech?” When you have a limited amount of time to convey your library message, what do you say? I find that this happens in unexpected settings (not usually an elevator!), and it's helpful to prepare ahead for questions such as: “What does





the library most want to accomplish?” “What’s exciting at the library these days?” or even “I’d like to give the library a gift to support this area—what are the possibilities?”

### **Listen to Your Donors and Understand Their Passions, Values, and Interests**

You may feel that your library is in desperate need of something and that item is what you should ask a donor to support. The approach is more often the opposite one—what is the donor passionate about and how does that possibly match with the library’s vision and goals?

Donors often give because of their passion or interest in an area, and they also give to what is important to them. Or they perceive that they can match their own values to library values and that their giving is a win/win situation for both the donor and the library. Or a donor may feel that a donation to the library translates to investing in a cause that is important to them. For example, here are two of PSU Library’s donors, Robin and Robert Holmes, talking about why they give to Portland State:

‘We’re focusing on PSU because we believe in the concept of an urban university, and we believe in PSU’s ability to provide education in a wide variety of fields,’ Robin said. ‘I believe the broader your education—and that includes an education in the arts—the more able you are to solve problems, whatever your profession,’ Robert Holmes explains. (Portland State University Library, n.d.)

Discover an individual donor’s passion or interest and then help the donor see how the library is impactful or even transformative in that area. Tell them the impact and reach their gift will have to the library, to library users, and the broader community. Take the time to listen carefully to your donors. Then respond to what you have learned about your donor—donors give to what is important to them and support organizations that match their values and vision for the future.

### **Tell Your Library and Donor Stories**

People enjoy stories—they add a human element that makes talking about your library and its goals, impact, and value more understandable. Stories that talk about how your library has impacted a person’s life attract attention and can be a method of drawing donors in to learn more. Facts and figures are useful, but stories can make their meaning more powerful. For example, one of our library appeals started out with this story:


Our students are truly amazing—students like Victor Mena, active in student government, going to school full-time, and working many hours per week. Victor has a special passion for the Library and the ways in which we support his fellow students. Things like keeping the library open 24 hours at the end of the quarter, providing textbooks on library reserve, and creating collaborative group study spaces are all on the minds of students today. Victor is one of our strong student partners helping us to make a difference at PSU.

Donors may also be willing to have their own stories told as a way to encourage others to give to your library. One of our donor spotlights in our library newsletter told the



story of a generous donor, Bob Rawson, and stated “Bob donates to the Library because it ‘benefits all students, regardless of their major, regardless of their interests.’” A further sidebar then gave more information about charitable gift annuities, one of the ways that Bob Rawson has provided support to the Library. (Portland State University Library, 2014).

## Conclusion

Use your donor communications to build strong and ongoing relationships with your donors. Consider how general communications with users also include donors and potential donors as your audience. Listen to your donors, discover their passions, interests and values, and match communications to individual donors according to their preferences and place in the development process. Tell your library story and let donors know about your library! 

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# Integrated Marketing On A Shoestring Budget:

## Strategic Planning to Build Value for Libraries and Enhance Service

by **Kate Lasky**

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KATE LASKY

Kate Lasky has been the executive director of Josephine Community Libraries, Inc. since 2010. She holds a master's in education and serves on the Oregon Library Association Legislative and Development Committee. In 2015, she was honored by the Oregon Library Association with the Olé award which annually recognizes an Oregon public library employee who has displayed exceptional effort and excellence.

### Introduction

With ever-increasing demands for libraries to market their services and decreasing budgets for advertising and publicity, librarians face the difficult task of planning for strategic marketing with little to no infrastructure or support, either financially or with adequate staffing. But, that's no reason to give up.

With a few key strategies and some integrated marketing techniques, even the most meager budget can support impactful outcomes. While there is no substitute for professional marketing services or paid marketing staff, a few simple "rules of thumb" can help.

### Foundational Components

The foundation of any marketing strategy is branding. Components like the organization's logo, tagline, fonts, colors, and key messages build brand recognition and help to establish reliability and trust. This article doesn't cover the steps to identifying and systemizing brand development and delivery. Suffice it to say branding takes in-depth planning and above all, discipline. What is important is that a library has an authentic brand and uses it consistently.

At Josephine Community Libraries, the elements of the library's brand have been recorded in a style guide and a communications committee monitors its application. Because branding depends on consistency, making sure the components of the brand are always used is a key to success.

**BARRIERS TO SUCCESS:** Departments working separately can inadvertently leave one another out of the loop. For example, when a branch manager works to promote an event or program by building a flier or poster without using the most up to date components of the library's brand, the whole library system loses the opportunity for brand recognition. Enforcing the use of the brand's key components across the whole library system can be difficult, but the consequences of inconsistent branding are unmet goals.

**RULE OF THUMB:** Ensure consistency in branding across the library system.



Another foundational component for integrated marketing is the establishment of a communications platform. Both internal and external communications happen through an array of vehicles such as e-mail, website, television, newsletters, social media, handouts, etc. Some are more costly than others and require additional content development in order to execute successfully.

Here's a list of some communications vehicles utilized by Josephine Community Libraries:

- eNewsletter to all patrons
- Children's library eNewsletter
- Volunteer eNewsletter
- Press releases and earned media
- Public service announcements for broadcast
- Website and web pages
- Radio advertising and talk shows
- Television advertising
- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Community posters and fliers
- In-library or event handouts and signage
- Newspaper and magazine advertising
- E-mails to patrons and donors
- Direct mail to patrons and donors
- Presentations and speakers bureau, etc.

The entire list of communications vehicles creates a platform. With consistent branding and thoughtful communication through established vehicles across the platform, a library system is able to build awareness about its services and ultimately build value for libraries. Limited marketing budgets will necessarily restrict a library system's communications platform and the subsequent audience engagement; however, prioritization and strategic allocation of resources is paramount.

**BARRIERS TO SUCCESS:** Targeted marketing saves an organization money and time. Libraries do not have limitless marketing budget and staff time. Selection of a smaller audience can help optimize the marketing dollar. Attempting to reach everyone in the library's service community may be costing the organization more money than anticipated.

**RULE OF THUMB:** Target specific audiences with key messages.

Once branding is clearly communicated both internally and externally, the stage is set for integrated marketing. Integrated marketing can help an organization reach new audiences and better engage existing ones.

There are two main factors associated with successful integrated marketing.

1. Carrying out targeted marketing activities to communicate and deliver value.
2. Coordinating these marketing activities to achieve maximum effect (Joseph, 2011).

Integrated marketing is like a puzzle of flexible variables. Shifting one component, whether it is audience, program, or location will result in an increase or decrease in engagement. Putting the pieces of the puzzle together to generate the desired outcomes requires a foundation of consistent branding, clear communication to specific audiences, and strategic thinking (Joseph, 2011).



### **Engaging Library Patrons: Promoting an Existing Program or Event**

One approach to integrated marketing is to start with an existing program or event and seek to build usage and engagement. In this case, the program is already developed, but the publicity and promotion may not be delivering desired results (Ratnatunga, 2005).

One such program at Josephine Community Libraries was Young Master Gardeners, geared toward pre-school and elementary aged children. The program provided hands-on earth science lessons with supplementary literature in alignment with the Josephine County Master Gardeners curriculum for adults. Much time, planning, and resources went into the development of the program, so it was disappointing to all involved when the monthly classes had low attendance shortly after its launch in 2011.

Staff had faithfully utilized library branding to support promotion of the program, but attendance remained low for months. They used a variety of communications vehicles. From press releases and earned media to in-library handouts and eNewsletters articles, they publicized the program in all of the traditional ways. With continued low attendance, the Master Gardeners were ready to cancel the program altogether—ultimately wasting resources and time.

Library staff met and discussed the target audience, identifying families with young children as the key market or audience. They decided to try two new vehicles that could reach that specific audience—e-mail and social media. Utilizing the existing list of children's library eNewsletter recipients and the Facebook audience of primarily women with children, they created an eBlast, or single subject e-mail, about the next program. They also promoted the program on Facebook with consistent branding and the same program description. It worked, almost too well.

The next class was full, with more than 20 participants. Program organizers were happy, if not a little overwhelmed. Then, something surprising happened. The following month, using the same vehicles mentioned above, 40 attendees showed up to the class. Program organizers were unable to deliver the quality of program planned due to classroom management issues. The trend continued for several months until children had to be turned away due to over attendance. Finally, library staff decided to stop promoting the program on Facebook to limit marketing, and attendance settled back down to 20 participants.

**RULE OF THUMB:** Use more than one communications tool to reach an audience. Choose communications vehicles that fit the audience.

In this case, the flexible variable in marketing was the type of communications vehicle. By choosing multiple communications vehicles geared toward the specific audience most likely to benefit from the program, library staff boosted attendance. In retrospect, articles in the newspaper and the eNewsletter targeted too broad an audience, and the promotion of Young Master Gardeners was lost in the noise of advertising. A more targeted approach, combined with integrating multiple communication vehicles, yielded a better outcome.

The Josephine Community Libraries Young Master Gardeners program is still well attended today, and has been replicated in one of the rural branch libraries five years later.





### Reaching a New Audience: Enhancing an Existing Program

Another approach to integrated marketing is to identify an audience and develop a program or event to engage them. This is different than promoting an existing program, as it allows for new program development or program enhancement, calling for some strategic planning.

In 2012, staff at the Grants Pass branch of Josephine Community Libraries recognized patrons' need for additional technology support. In this case, the technology program was not meeting the needs of the audience and needed enhancement. Patrons would bring extension cords to the library and drape them across the isles to reach a table where they could work. This posed a tripping hazard to other patrons browsing the library's collection of books and materials.

Staff met several times over the course of a few months to identify the audience's behavior and reconfigure the space to streamline the library's technology services. The reconfiguration of space required shelf shifting, new furniture, additional wiring for Internet stations, and signage utilizing library branding. Staff developed a new project and sought grant funds to pay for the necessary capital improvements to implement this program enhancement. A year and a half later, the Grants Pass branch was able to offer new seating for 15 more patrons using personal technology. The library sent a press release to celebrate the success of the program citing support from grant funders.

From this program enhancement project, a new and unforeseen audience emerged. Tutors and students began utilizing the new space with personal laptops for study, an audience or market that had been unserved by the previous space. Because the library's new space was consistently full, advertising and publicity were not required, but could support further growth in the program if capacity allowed.

**RULE OF THUMB:** Think about gaps in the library's market. Develop programs for new audiences, not only existing ones.


In this case, the flexible variable in marketing was the service or program. By identifying the audience in need of service, reconfiguration of library space helped connect the target audience to the service most likely to benefit them, boosting participation and growing the market. In retrospect, library staff could have banned the use of extension cords and eliminated the problem. A more targeted approach, combined with filling a gap in service, yielded a better outcome.

### Conclusion

Consistent branding and a clear communications plan to achieve desired outcomes is important to getting started in integrated marketing. The first step is to understand the library's brand, the key messages, and the audience to be reached. By utilizing foundational components of branding consistently across the communication platform, libraries can leverage multiple communications vehicles to increase impact and deliver successful outcomes.

Carrying out different marketing activities and coordinating them for maximum effect doesn't have to cost a lot of money (Ratnatunga, 2005). Some communications vehicles are less costly than others. As long as the audience remains the central focus of the plan, less expensive vehicles like e-mail and press releases can produce measurable results, such as increased program attendance and greater awareness of library services.



There are many different approaches to library patron engagement and marketing. From promoting an existing program to enhancing a program in order to reach new markets, libraries are rich with opportunities to employ marketing techniques and enhance strategic planning. The key to integrated marketing is piecing the puzzle together to fit the library's audience and budget. By diligently applying the simple principle of consistency, any library can optimize its resources to build awareness and value. 

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# Leveraging Social Media to Support a Library Levy Campaign

**by Ross Fuqua**

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ROSS FUQUA

Ross Fuqua has been a librarian with WCCLS since 2014, after working on and promoting a statewide cultural heritage digitization initiative at the Washington State Library. He holds a master's in public folklore from Western Kentucky University, and has helped a number of organizations improve access to collections through audio and image digitization, digital asset management, and media production.

In November 2015, voters in Washington County, Oregon, approved a 5-year replacement levy to support countywide library services (Measure 34-235), with 64 percent voting in favor of the measure. As a unique partnership between our county, nine municipalities, and two nonprofit organizations, Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) organized a successful levy education effort specifically for social media for its twelve member libraries. With the passing of Measure 34-235, WCCLS member libraries are now positioned to continue providing the best possible library service to our patrons for the next five years.

## About WCCLS

Our model for public library service in Washington County, Oregon, is unique, to say the least. Ranging from a few small town public libraries serving rural areas, to libraries within densely populated suburban areas on the very edge of Portland, membership of Washington County Cooperative Library Services is currently made up of 12 independently run community and municipal libraries (several with multiple branches), as well as two special libraries. Member libraries are managed locally, where they are best able to focus on meeting the needs of their specific communities. The majority of operating funds come from WCCLS and are supplemented with local funds. In turn, Washington County runs Central Support and Outreach Services, which among other details handles certain shared infrastructure such as courier services, summer reading support, WiFi and Internet, e-content collections, and an integrated library catalog system, as well as outreach services to underserved populations. Through extensive committee work, all agencies and organizations come together to help shape priorities for sharing these crucial resources across the cooperative.



The operating levy, measured at 22 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, will be factored into the budget for WCCLS beginning with fiscal year 2016–17 and going through fiscal year 2020–21. The goals and priorities our cooperative identified during this period of time are to maintain patron access to core library services, to increase efficiencies in service delivery, to expand e-content collections, and to support early learning opportunities for children and youth. While the breakdown for how funds are distributed gets rather complicated, it is safe to say that levy funds are fundamental to the amount and quality of service that our member libraries are able to provide to their patrons.

### Education and Advocacy

Washington County voters had not voted on a library levy measure since 2010. This was at a time when social media efforts were still in a rather burgeoning stage for both WCCLS and its member libraries. Facebook had only rolled out Facebook Pages accounts for businesses, agencies and institutions the prior year (Greenstein, 2009). Instagram was only a few weeks old on Election Day 2010 (Sengupta, Perlroth, & Wortham, 2012), and only 8 percent of online Americans were using Twitter (Smith & Rainie, 2010). Given the much wider rates of adoption for social media users over the last five years, we all knew social media would play a much greater role in voter education in 2015.

It's obvious to most that communications and marketing have seen revolutionary changes in the past 15 years, and much of these efforts rely on social media now more than ever. As a cooperative library system, each member library maintains their own communication and marketing efforts (as does WCCLS itself), which now include dozens of social media channels across the cooperative. In addition, many of these channels are managed by teams at each library, which means that countywide we have a lot of individuals creating content and interacting online with patrons through library social media.

To comply with Oregon election laws, public libraries find themselves in the position of being tasked with providing objective information about levy funding issues without advocating for a particular position. We needed all of our libraries to be careful to avoid any language of advocacy in support of Measure 34-235 while still providing objective information to the voting public, both in person and online. With so many library staff getting involved in social media at their library, we saw a big need and opportunity to address these often fine lines of advocacy and information sharing with fellow staff across the cooperative.

At the county level, we wanted to support and empower our fellow social media managers at our member libraries, giving them training and guidelines to help them feel confident creating content and managing positive patron interactions concerning the levy. Developing a countywide social media content strategy for the first time, WCCLS created and delivered training, sample content and a content calendar [Figure 1] for member library staff to utilize for a seven-week period leading up to the election. As a result, we successfully educated the public about Measure 34-235 via social media, while using supporting messaging to illustrate the great work of our library cooperative.

### Our Approach

Starting in the summer of 2015, WCCLS staff utilized Washington County election materials that had been reviewed by the Oregon Secretary of State's Elections Division for compliance with Oregon Revised Statutes. Using vetted language and images as a framework, we




identified several key points on which to focus our voter education efforts through social media. Each week for seven weeks leading up to Election Day, we chose a key message of voter education about the levy to broadcast through simple Facebook and Twitter posts. We came up with very clear guidelines for answering questions and handling comments regarding the levy via social media as well. In addition to this plan, we created a companion campaign which we ran simultaneously over the seven week period. This secondary campaign did not mention the levy explicitly, yet drew attention to each week's informational theme by highlighting appropriate library activities and accomplishments.

In early September, WCCLS Adult Services staff presented a webinar to staff and volunteers at member libraries and the Aloha Community Library on the levy education strategy for social media. The primary focus was to empower frontline staff and those handling library social media accounts with the confidence to provide the public with neutral, educational information regarding Measure 34-235. We stressed the difference between voter education and library advocacy, and our responsibilities as public employees to do so. Through a number of examples, we also demonstrated supporting messages (which did not mention the levy specifically) to use in addition to our levy education messaging.

In addition, WCCLS staff provided our libraries with a detailed social media content calendar, as well as sample posts that they could utilize or share for both levy education and supporting messaging. Our supporting messages were organized around a different theme each week which again helped to reinforce that week's particular levy education points. We

WCCLS Levy & Supporting Messaging Calendar 2015

Week of September 21: Background info			
Type of Post	Twitter text (117 char limit w/ image; 95 w/ image and link)	Facebook text	Image (use the full version from the Extranet)
Levy messaging	Measure 34-235 supports WCCLS library operations, & replaces a 5-year levy expiring June 2016. <a href="http://wccls.org/levy">wccls.org/levy</a>	For 39 years, WCCLS has provided funding for public library operations, central support and outreach programs linking together city and community libraries. Measure 34-235 replaces a 5-year levy expiring June 2016, which provides 1/3 of WCCLS funding. For more information: <a href="http://wccls.org/levy">wccls.org/levy</a>	
Supporting messaging	History & background of the cooperative.		


Week of September 28: Statistics about services - hours, technology, holds, & circ			
Type of Post	Twitter text (117 char limit w/ image; 95 w/ image and link)	Facebook text	Image (use the full version from the Extranet)
Levy messaging	Measure 34-235 maintains WCCLS library hours, shared technology, & courier services. <a href="http://wccls.org/levy">wccls.org/levy</a>	Measure 34-235 provides central and outreach services that link our libraries together. With this levy, WCCLS will maintain daily deliveries of materials between libraries to fill patron requests; maintain the WCCLS website and shared library catalog, and public Internet and WiFi at libraries; provide outreach to special populations such as mail delivery to homebound residents. For more information: <a href="http://wccls.org/levy">wccls.org/levy</a>	
Supporting messaging	WCCLS provides shared resources to improve services at member libraries.		

FIGURE 1: Page 1 of 2015 WCCLS levy and supporting messaging social media content calendar. As you can see, content calendars need not be complicated, and can help organize and focus social media strategies for larger organizations with distributed social media teams.





FIGURE 2: A WCCLS graphic optimized for a Facebook Page cover image, directing patrons to an informational webpage about Measure 34-235, distributed to WCCLS member libraries for use on their own Facebook Pages.

sent weekly reminders to our libraries' social media administrators to maintain the messaging campaign's momentum. Customized graphics to use for cover images [Figure 2] and organic posts to direct viewers to our levy information page on the WCCLS website were used by most member libraries and the Aloha Community Library as well.

### Successes

We received a strong level of positive engagement (through likes, comments, retweets, and face-to-face comments) from our patrons and communities, all of which helped extend our messaging beyond our regular followers. Member libraries reported that the content calendar, and the regular support and encouragement that WCCLS provided, helped them maintain focus and momentum with their own social media efforts. When pressed for time, member libraries were able to simply copy and paste or share our prepared content for their own social media accounts which proved to be beneficial. Alternately, our member libraries were able to tailor each week's theme as needed locally, in order to speak more directly to their local patrons and supporters.

Another positive outcome of our levy education effort was that WCCLS was approached by EveryLibrary ([www.everylibrary.org](http://www.everylibrary.org)), a nonprofit that assists with local library ballot measures across the U.S., to use our content calendar and documents as samples of best practices. Most importantly, however, our member libraries have expressed how beneficial this collaborative effort was in helping them deftly navigate the election season.

### Thanks!

From a purely numbers-based standpoint, our best social media engagement came immediately after polls closed on Election Night, November 3, 2015, when it was clear that Washington County voters had chosen to approve the levy. We were able to report early results on Facebook and Twitter that evening, and the following morning we broadcast a message of thanks on social media to all of our followers.

To date, these 'thank you' posts remain some of our most popular since WCCLS first began using social media. Using a simply designed graphic [Figure 3] that we encouraged member libraries to share and post, we received overwhelming goodwill and support from our communities and patrons via social media throughout the rest of week following the election. 🐾



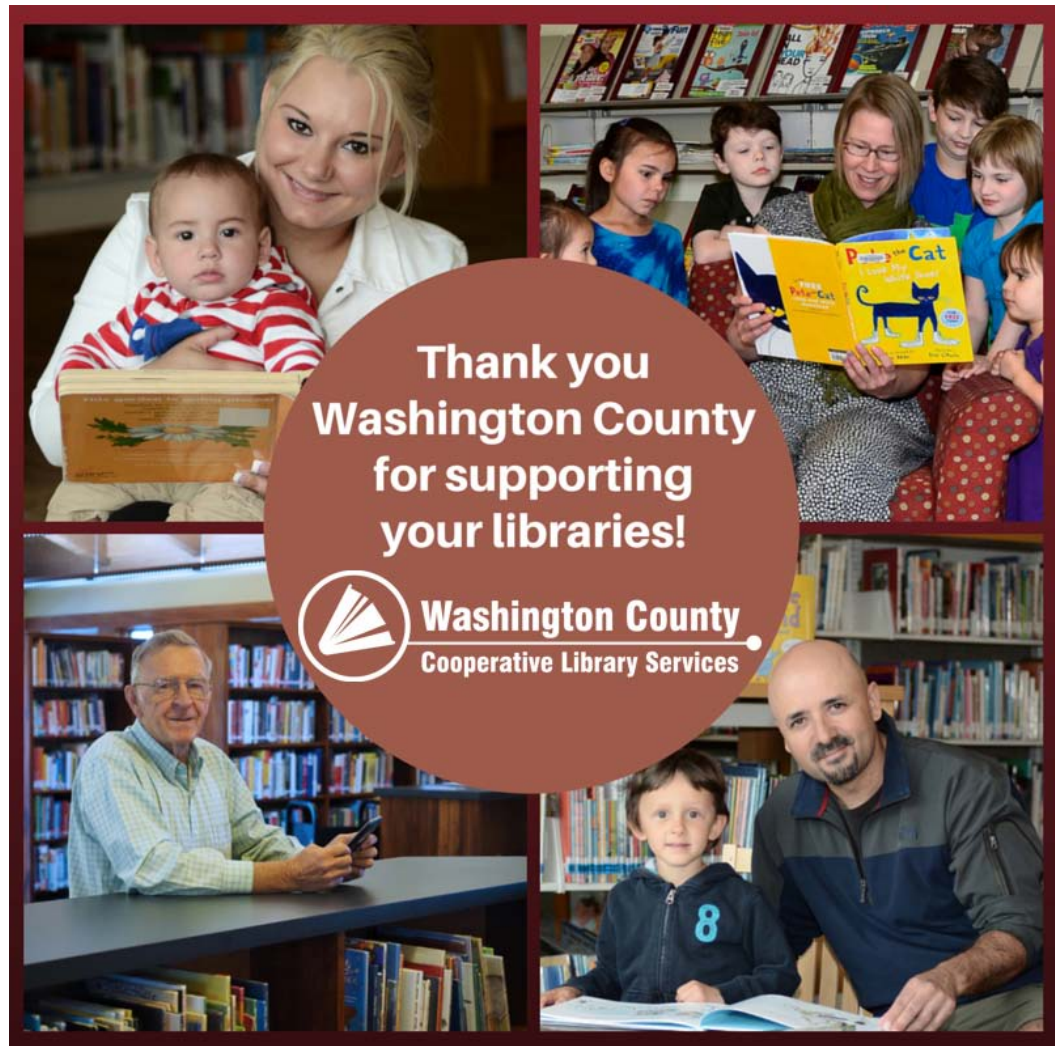


FIGURE 3: A WCCLS graphic optimized for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter thanking followers for their support on Measure 34-235, distributed to and shared by WCCLS member libraries following the 2015 election.

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# Stick to the Message. Vary the Method.

by **Paula M. Walker**  
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PAULA WALKER

Paula Walker has worked at the Tigard Library for nearly 25 years. She was Circulation Manager from 1992–2000 and became the Communications Coordinator in 2001. She has been the press secretary and speechwriter for former Montana Governor Ted Schwinden. Walker was a researcher for *Congressional Quarterly* and wrote for *National Business Woman* magazine in Washington D.C. She was also a writer/editor for *Northwest Energy News*. A jazz fan, she has been a DJ on KMHD, Portland's jazz radio station since 2000. She currently hosts a show called Cinejazz, which features jazz from film and television.

To communicate effectively, you must identify a need; prioritize what is most important; decide what you want to communicate; have it be relevant to your audience; **and then repeat it.** You can't say everything. You have to decide what is most important to say, focus on whom you are saying it to, and say it in terms it makes sense to them. **Then you have to repeat the message over and over, because people are busy and have a lot of information coming at them in a 24-hour news cycle.** (*emphasis added*)

—DEE DEE MYERS  
Former White House Spokesperson

Dee Dee Myers' quote opened the Tigard Library's 2001 Communication Plan. Our goal? To build a new library. The time frame? From November 2001 to Election Day on May 21, 2002.

While city and library staff had laid the groundwork for a new library for several years, we basically had six months to educate voters. That election required a double majority, where more than 50 percent of registered voters had to cast a ballot, and more than 50 percent of them had to say "yes." Tigard voters passed the measure 60 percent to 40 percent. It was one of only three money measures in the Portland metro area to pass in the primary that year.

The media and marketing milieu has changed a great deal over the past 14 years. Some say it has evolved. Others claim it has eroded. Are there any lessons from that successful campaign that are still applicable today?

Although social media is a useful communications tool, it is as important today as it was in 2002 to reach people in a variety of ways. More digital options exist for communicating these days, but it does not end there. In order to fully convey the sights, sounds, feel and even taste of libraries, it is helpful to approach the message from different angles.



Our communications arsenal in the 2002 bond measure campaign included publications, productions on local cable access, articles in the city and Washington County Co-operative Library Services (WCCLS) newsletters, public meetings, library programs, news stories, children's activities, civic organization meetings, community events, contests and public officials' presentations. Fourteen years later we have dropped some and added others.

### **Not All Social Media Is Online**

According to Random House Dictionary, the term "social media" was created between 2000 and 2005. It was hardly a household word in Tigard in 2002. Facebook was still two years away. Twitter hatched in spring of 2006.

Social media meant something entirely different at the beginning of the millennium. Emphasis on "social." The best way to engage people about the bond measure was face-to-face, whether in community meetings, presentations at civic organizations or by talking to people who walked through the front doors.

That gets a little tricky during a ballot measure campaign. As public employees, we could not advocate for or against ballot measures; we could only provide the facts. We could explain what the measure would and would not do, but if someone asked us if they should vote for it, we couldn't say "yes." Yet, then as now, one-on-one communication is often the most meaningful way to respond to questions and dispel misconceptions.

While we had fliers and fact sheets about the ballot measure, other evidence of the campaign existed throughout the library. Whether it was a jar encouraging people to leave their spare change to support the new library, an architectural model of what a new library might look like or an art contest inviting kids to draw their vision of a new library, library users saw constant reminders as they browsed and studied.

The drawback was in the number of people we could reach at any one time. Digital media offers the potential for a much bigger audience, but we still need to convince people to click.

### **How Do People Learn About Library Programs and Services?**

The Tigard Library has conducted a non-scientific annual survey about library services for more than 20 years. Periodically, we ask people to tell us all the ways they learn about library programs and services. The responses have changed over the past few years.

In 2012, the top five responses were:

1. Library Fliers, Posters, Brochures (in-house) 54.6 %
2. Tigard Library website 49.4 %
3. Books & Bits library e-newsletter 32.8 %
4. Cityscape city newsletter 29.2 %
5. Word-of-Mouth (friends, library staff) 18.9 %

In 2013 the Pew Research Center surveyed Americans on how they used libraries. They found that more people were using library websites. Our 2016 survey seemed to bear that out:

1. Tigard Library website 58.9 %
2. Books & Bits (Library e-newsletter) 38.6 %
3. Library posters, brochures, bookmarks (in-house) 36.6 %
4. WCCLS website 35.1 %
5. Word-of-Mouth (friends, library staff) 28.8 %





Newspapers, Facebook, Twitter, Oregonlive and Cityscape, the city's e-newsletter, were the other options listed on our survey.

As Dee Dee Myers indicates, repetition is the key to penetrating the cyclone of information that whirls around people daily. With a variety of formats, we can tell the story in different ways. Digital media has become more visual. Whether it's photos on Facebook or YouTube videos on our websites, it has become easier to bring the story of libraries to life in living color.


### Getting Started with Publicity

The greatest outcome of the Tigard Library's successful bond measure campaign was a beautiful new 48,000 square-foot library. A by-product of that success was an appreciation of the effectiveness of a concerted library public relations effort. When the library bond measure passed, both city and library officials better understood how focused publicity could benefit both the library and the city.

When I began in libraries in 1990, a professional public relations staff member was not on most library directors' radars, especially in small and medium-sized libraries. In 2001 the Tigard Library hired me on a temporary basis to run the bond measure information campaign. When it passed, Library Director Margaret Barnes convinced city officials to add the position to the budget. Tigard became the first public library in Washington County with a public relations position.

Over the years several library directors have wistfully expressed to us their desire to have a public relations position on staff. Front-line staffing is often the priority for libraries. With strained budgets, the prospect of adding an entirely new salary may cause some to cringe. Perhaps a part-time position would be more palatable. I have been the part-time Communications Coordinator at the Tigard Library for 14 years.

Although I am the coordinator, virtually every member of the staff is involved in public relations. Whether it is greeting patrons warmly as we issue them a library card or informing them about programs at our public service desks, staff engages in one-on-one social media daily, as they do in all public libraries. Our online social media effort is handled by a group of talented, creative librarians who post clever informative messages and photos on Facebook and Twitter several times a week.

For those libraries who want to ramp up their publicity efforts, begin by focusing on one small project, developing a communications plan and conveying the message in a variety of ways. Small successes can lead to larger paybacks. And above all, repeat, repeat, repeat. 

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# Marketing Then and Now: One Librarian's Journey

**by Diane Sotak**

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DIANE SOTAK

Diane Sotak has accumulated 20 years of experience in academic libraries. Before that she worked on a variety of wildlife research projects in Alaska and Oregon. She has a B.S. in Natural Resources from the University of Michigan and a Master of Library Science from Syracuse University.

In the not so distant past, marketing was a department on campus, rather than a strategic approach used within the library. Today, the role of an academic library is subtle and varied. Frankly, it's complicated! Libraries are increasingly asked to prove their value by documenting their impact on student engagement and success. They need to continually reinforce their reputation as a dynamic entity that supports its community in many ways. A marketing culture within the library is essential to making the case, telling the stories and creating a presence. After years of "marketing" for the library, I'm still figuring it out. In case it is instructive, here is my journey so far.

## Back Then

I started working at the University of Portland in 2001 as a Reference and Instruction Librarian. Our small staff wear a variety of hats, so in 2002, "marketing" the library became one of my responsibilities. At that time, my concept of marketing was really one of promotion. I busied myself with documenting campus publicity contacts and deadlines, and then creating and distributing materials.

Library publicity efforts were driven by the routine and the beneficial. Routine publicity synced with the academic calendar. Fall semester about to start? Promote course reserves services to faculty and welcome new students. Academic year ending? Congratulate the graduates and remind everyone to return materials before leaving for the summer.

The beneficial publicity sought to increase awareness of things we viewed as important: new resources, exhibits, workshops, and changes to services. Promotion was often the last consideration and boiled down to "XYZ is available, and it is good for people to know about; get the word out." I bumbled along, creating flyers, student newspaper ads, brief pieces in the University's weekly staff newsletter, and occasionally sending mass e-mails. I had limited design skills and clip art was my friend.

The silver lining was that centralizing marketing with one person also helped develop consistency in how the library and its services were described in University, campus, and library publications. These activities consumed a small portion of my total workload and laid the groundwork for future growth.



## Evolving with the Times

Spurred on by a library strategic planning effort in 2010, I delved into the marketing and communications literature for guidance. It slowly sunk in that marketing is more than publicizing. It's the process of planning, designing, and executing communications. It's not haphazard, but intentional and a shared responsibility.

### INTEGRATING MARKETING INTO PLANNING

With this new perspective, I drafted a planning tool for colleagues to use in the early stages of a project or initiative. Based on feedback, the template has been revised a few times to improve its utility. In its current incarnation it prompts people to identify:

- Contact person for the project
- Target audience(s)
- Communication goals (awareness, attendance, increased usage, etc.)
- Proposed timeline (includes project date and any dates for advance, launch, and post-launch publicity)
- Description for publicity (including images, logos)
- Communication methods (presents a checklist of communication modes available on campus, within the library building, and beyond campus)

This is when I get to shift to wearing the marketing consultant hat. I meet with people to discuss the prompts and have follow-up conversations to clarify details while I assist with planning and crafting of publicity. Due to the timeline aspect, it also serves as an initial project management tool. It requires people to think of a project in concrete terms early on, which can raise important questions about goals, implementation and staff resources.

This tool has been beneficial for budgeting time to provide marketing support to my colleagues. Of course, in an age of “nimble” and “responsive” communications there are still times that things happen “on-the-fly,” but now there is a shared understanding of what it takes.

## Empowering Others and Letting Go

A marketing culture takes time to cultivate, and I wrestled with how to involve others while being mindful of their main workload. Library staff members have always supported marketing efforts that intersected with their primary duties. Some years ago, I tried running a volunteer marketing committee with mixed results. It was great for generating ideas, but the nuts and bolts fell to me, so only a few ideas were realized. My time and energy were limiting factors and the committee didn't last long.

The chance to try again arose after a major building renovation in 2012-2013. The entire staff pulled together as we moved to an interim location for a year, and then moved back and reopened. The experience fostered more collaboration among staff and the “can do” attitude and commitment remains strong. The reopened building also ushered in a new phase of engagement with our community. Library use skyrocketed, and the building itself was a powerful marketing tool.

It was time to ramp up our communication efforts to capitalize on this newfound popularity, but more minds and hands were needed to strategize and manage the moving pieces. I made the case for appointing a Marketing Committee, and the Library Dean agreed. The



committee meets monthly and is comprised of people who often assist with marketing efforts as part of their work. It includes myself, the Library Dean, the Head of Public Services, the Administrative Assistant, and the Digital Initiatives Coordinator.

As chair of the committee, I arrange the agenda to maximize our face-to-face time. First we debrief on projects in the previous month. The debriefing includes staff feedback and suggestions solicited at other standing meetings. We discuss and document any changes to the recurring events. The other half of the agenda looks ahead to what is coming in the next few months. We begin discussing strategies, determining timelines, and identifying which staff will be involved.

Staff are also encouraged to take ownership of projects of interest to them. Two examples are a holiday fundraiser and Staff Picks for our new books shelf. I provided some assistance on the publicity side, but they handled the planning and logistics. Our student assistants have also been valuable allies. They enjoy creating whiteboard messages for our lobby, which we use to draw attention to an event or activity. We also get their input on wording so we can avoid library jargon. The Digital Lab Coordinator and student assistants use their graphic design skills to create slides for our entryway monitors, along with other materials.

## Managing and Sustaining

With more people involved in the marketing effort, I tried to find a mechanism to track and coordinate our efforts. I explored using a shared calendar in Microsoft Outlook, but it can't automatically send e-mail reminders to specific people. The University just added Office 365, and it has a promising planner app that I've volunteered to test out with the Marketing committee. It could be the marketing management tool I have been seeking! A short demo of it is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAiEZskegzo>.

I also investigated software for creating an annual calendar and have settled on Excel. Some of the others were intriguing, but were enterprise software not available to us. The Excel calendar maps out each academic year and is populated with our routine or recurring activities. As new things come up, they are integrated into the calendar, which is available to all staff. I rely on it to develop the monthly meeting agendas.


To make our marketing efforts sustainable, I created an archive of publicity and debriefing documents. This shared folder is available to all staff. It is also important to have back-up and prepare other people to step in and maintain the momentum, especially for communications that require accounts (i.e., social media).

Another aspect of sustaining a marketing effort is continuing to evaluate existing and new communication modes. For example, after exploring social media options, I opted to create a library presence in Twitter and Instagram as an efficient way to create an impression and humanize the library. Since the University has a very successful social media presence, I determined our time was better spent having occasional posts on their Facebook page, rather than creating our own. The next steps will be to assess the "reach" of our communication methods to find out which ones are most productive and worth the investment of time and energy.

## Right Now

I'm still finding my footing and it turns out that marketing means wearing multiple hats: consultant, project manager, communications specialist. Time and skills are still limiting



factors, and marketing-related responsibilities consume up to a third of my workload. I enjoy connecting the library to its community, but as an amateur, I've longed to develop my understanding and skills. I'll finally have the time to immerse myself in this area when I go on sabbatical later this year. It's an incredible opportunity to reflect, learn and share while upgrading my graphic design skills. If you have questions or want to discuss anything library marketing, please get in touch. 

## Resources

The library marketing pulse is getting stronger! Here are some resources to help you keep your finger on the pulse:

The 'M' Word—Marketing Libraries: Marketing tips and trends  
for libraries and non-profits  
<http://themwordblog.blogspot.com/>

Libraries Transform: An initiative of the American Library Association  
<http://www.ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/>  
#librariestransform

Library Marketing and Communications Conference Group  
<https://www.facebook.com/LMCCConference>

Librarian Design Share: inspiration for library creatives  
<http://librariandesignshare.org/>



# Starting from Square One:

## Library Communications from the Ground Up

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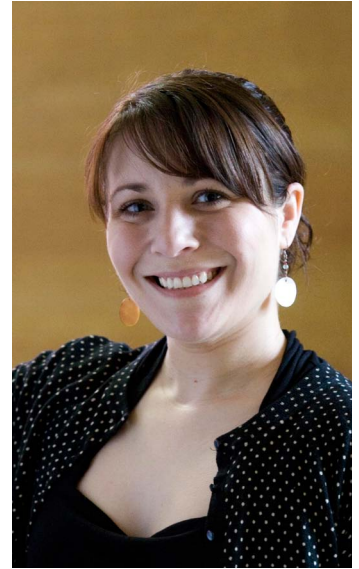
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LESLI LARSON



JASON STONE



MANDI GARCIA

### Background: How Our Department Became a Department

Often referred to as the heart of the university, the library is a place for students to gather, study, work, find help, and make the most of their college experience. Sometimes called “the third place,” it is a destination for collaboration, relaxation, employment, research, and community. It is a place that students can rely on.

A university library holds thousands of stories within its doors: stories about successes, challenges, opportunities, discoveries, and the people who work through them. At the University of Oregon Libraries, our Communications and Marketing Department strives to tell some of these stories. We use several different media and many diverse strategies to do so. Our goal is to support the work of our outstanding librarians and library staff, and to create the best learning environment for student success. Through our storytelling, we advance the library’s mission.

Of course, many of the great stories to be found within our libraries are nothing new. Libraries have been helping students, teachers, and researchers for centuries. What is new—not only here at the UO Libraries, but also at many of our peer institutions—is a shift in consciousness with regards to our storytelling. In an era when the media and telecommunications landscape is continuously in flux, and the missions of our libraries are likewise evolving, library leaders are more aware than ever of the need for skilled and coordinated efforts in organizational communications and outreach. At the UO, this awareness recently led to an important “first”: we started a new department dedicated to library communications.

Our department was launched two years ago. It developed out of need. During organization-wide listening sessions in the summer of 2013, better-integrated marketing and communications support was named by multiple library departments as a “wish list” opportunity. At the same time, the library staff members in the various communications roles







The UO Libraries Communications & Marketing team visits the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology (OIMB), summer 2015. L-R: Exhibits Designer Cristian Boboia, OIMB Librarian Barbara Butler, Jason Stone, Mandi Garcia, Student Photographer Emily Albertson, Lesli Larson, Student Videographer Joe Hughes.

found themselves scattered among different offices and departments in the library, and they often felt isolated and overwhelmed by the amount of work on their plates.

Well, if you've worked in libraries for any amount of time, you can probably guess where this is going: a marketing committee was formed. The committee's charge was to help streamline the process for planning and promoting events, exhibits, and library news. However, committee members quickly realized that demand for communications support far outweighed the present capacity to provide it. Requests were coming from various departments, from all eight of our branch libraries. After surveying stakeholders and doing the necessary research, the committee proposed creating a new communications and marketing department. The goal was to increase awareness of library services, collections, and facilities with targeted outreach to university undergraduates. The plan was to achieve greater efficiencies, creative synergies, and outcomes by freeing library communications staff to concentrate on communications and coordinating their efforts under a communications director.

It was an idea whose time had come. Many of the key skills and experience sets we needed were already represented by existing library personnel. UO Libraries therefore was able to form the new department largely through staff shuffling, without adding very much FTE to our overall workforce. (In the present climate of tightening higher education budgets, this was more than convenient—it was nearly imperative.)

The UO Libraries Communications and Marketing Department was officially founded in 2014, centralizing the library's personnel and resources in the areas of graphic design, copywriting and editing, website content management, social media outreach, exhibit services, and strategic communications. The department was set up with 3.75 FTE. Our permanent staff



includes the director, a writer/editor, a graphic designer/photographer, and an exhibits designer. In addition, all our efforts are supported by the work of our amazing student employees.

In the past two years, Communications and Marketing has significantly built out the UO Libraries' social media presence, revamped and expanded the library's development publication, *Building Knowledge*, launched an in-house video project to promote library student employment, and produced numerous print collateral campaigns in support of library exhibits, events, resources, and programs. In addition, the department has partnered with the library's web development group and the User Experience unit to redesign the library's homepage and update wayfinding and directional signage throughout the main library.

The establishment of our department has enriched and expanded the library's communication efforts. We advance the educational mission of UO Libraries and its relationship with the academic community through the development of original editorial and marketing collateral, exhibits, special events, audio-video content, and social media outreach. Additionally, we ensure that library communications follow UO brand standards and align with campus-level communications efforts.

### **Lesli Larson, Director of Communications UO Libraries Social Media Strategies**

A strategic area of growth for the department was the creation of a dedicated social media program. With the help of a series of astute, student social media coordinators, the library joined Instagram and YouTube (we'll soon be joining Snapchat as well) while updating our

presence on Facebook and Twitter with a more youthful tone and voice. Our goal is to create a distinct and consistent social media voice and identity for UO Libraries that increases levels of interaction with followers and generates a greater awareness of our collections, events, and services.

Calibrating our content for an undergraduate audience, we launched a series of library campaigns highlighting high-value resources like our extended building hours, Bookeye document scanners, 3-D printer, study spaces, phone charging stations, loaner GoPro cameras, and chat reference services. In surveys of senior class members, all these had been identified as resources that they wish they had known about before they graduated.

By far, Instagram has been our most successful social media channel for student engagement. All posts make use of multimedia content to increase visual interest and highlight the photographic, videographic, and design talents of our creative student team. Ongoing campaigns include:



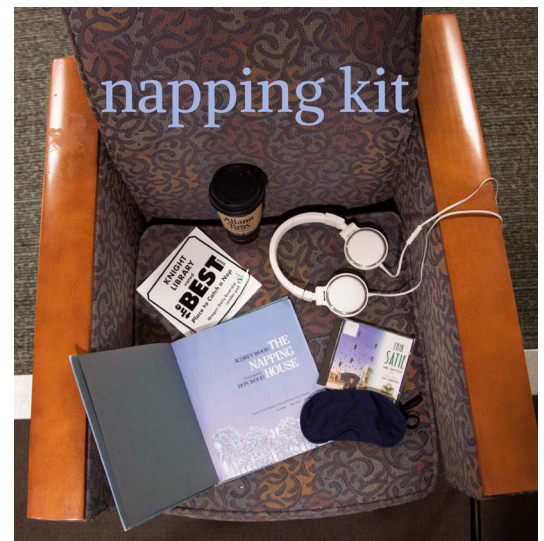
This cover of the UO Libraries donor publication features Merry Prankster Ken Babbs, basketball hall-of-famer Bill Walton, and Student Social Media Coordinator Leah Braunstein.



- #wayfinderwednesday (using POV video to guide students from the front of the library to a specific resource or collection)
- #allknightatknight (24-5 building hours)
- #myuolibjob (highlighting student employment opportunities in the library)
- #techtuesday (showcasing technology resources)

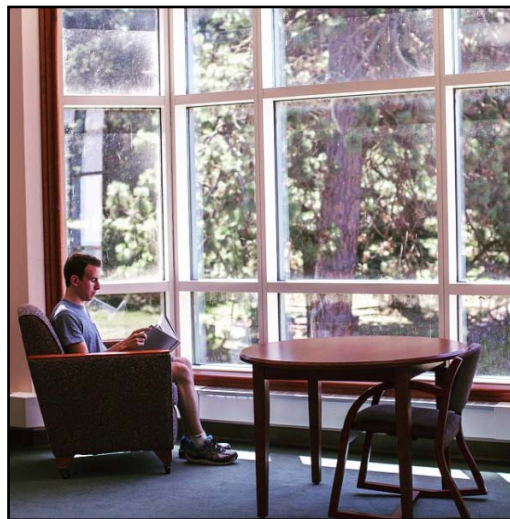
In the past year, we have developed three specific campaigns to cross-promote library resources, promote the library as a study space, and demystify service desks.

For finals week, our Social Media Coordinator put together a series of “kits” for students that group library resources around themes like productivity, group study, or napping. Each kit shows a collection of items which reference a range of finals-related support services and resources in an informal and lighthearted way.

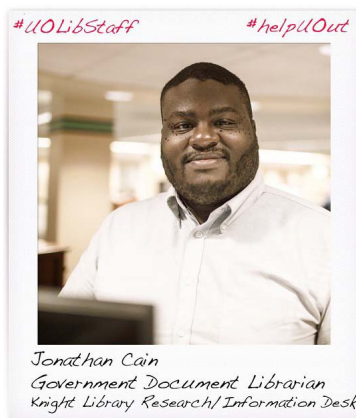




In our “#uostudyspot” campaign, we posted photos of library study spots in both obvious and out-of-the-way places in our main and branch libraries. On Instagram, we craft our campaign hashtags to be short and catchy, and encourage students to pick up and repurpose them. For the #uostudyspot campaign, a number of students posted their own photos using the hashtag which in turn provided us with info on how (and when) students study and which library spaces they prefer (quiet or collaborative, large open spaces or out-of-the-way cubicles). Further, by choosing a hashtag that had less of a library focus, we encourage other campus departments (and non-library users) to join the campaign. Our aim is to promote the library as part of the larger campus ecology.



Finally, for our third campaign, we put together a portrait series that helped put a friendly face to the many service desks in the library. Our graphics student designed a Polaroid-inspired framing device to give staff and student profile photos (shot on a DSLR) a softened, informal feel. Each week, we posted a new profile photo with additional information about the staff member—and service desk—included in the text field. The promo featured staff from multiple service desks (main, computer help, music, Architecture and Allied Arts Library) highlighting the diversity of people and services offered by the library.



Adding a student-directed voice to our social media program helped calibrate the tone of our messaging making it more succinct, youthful and conversational while helping us to create compelling, media-rich visual campaigns that resonate with undergraduate library users.

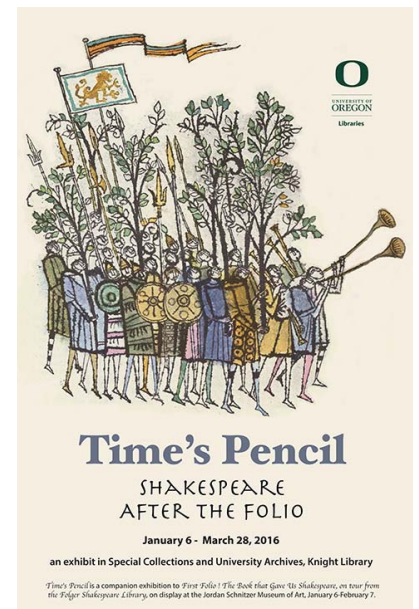


Student Social Media Coordinator Michaela Giunchigliani frames a shot for a promotional video.

### **Mandi Garcia, Senior Graphic Designer Hiring Talented Student Employees and the Digital Display System**

Most of our student workforce are undergraduates; the number we employ varies from term to term, depending on funding and the sorts of projects we have in progress. We look for extraordinarily talented and motivated students—and so far, we have certainly found them! They offer interesting insights into the campus scene, and always bring creative ideas to the table. Working with our students is one of the best parts of the department. They are our inspiration.

For many student employees, this is their first job. So we look at their portfolios and conduct an interview with multiple staff members from our department. We want students who are eager to learn, taking advantage of their employment to build a strong foundation, learning the fundamentals of real-world work and taking the initiative to develop projects from start to finish. While the department typically has a single student assigned to a specific area of work, we try to capitalize on the collective skill sets of our creative student team.



Poster designed by Cristian Boboia to promote a recent exhibit in UO Libraries Special Collections and University Archives.





We have hired student assistants in many areas, including graphic design, videography, social media content management, photography, writing, and wayfinding. When creating the department, we envisioned a hive of activity. We encourage collaboration among our students and ourselves.

I am the graphic designer/photographer and exhibit coordinator. I create graphics for everything from web and signage icons, to event posters and programs, to digital display slides. In addition, my student assistant and I photograph exhibits, certain items from Special Collections and University Archives, library events, and staff portraits. We get many requests for photography and graphics, and try to use as much original work as possible. In addition to the shots we take for specific projects, we also maintain an original stock photography collection. Our graphic design and photography students are able to support the work of our other student employees, providing them with the visuals they need for their projects. While employed by the library, they learn design standards, printing processes, naming conventions, and formatting.

We also create content for display on our digital signage system. When we started our department two years ago, we adopted a digital display system called Four Winds Interactive in order to enhance library learning spaces. Multiple schools and units across the UO campus use this system, making it possible to share resources with one another. Using Four Winds, we are able to schedule multiple display locations and create specialized rotations. We create “slides”—usually an image or short movie—and decide which display they will play on and for how long. We keep these displays up to date, showcasing recent news, events, exhibits, resources, services, collections, and other information we would like our users to know. In addition, we use these display screens to showcase video or other imagery that may accompany physical exhibits or events. Including basic design, we spend approximately .3 FTE managing the content for the system.



## UO Students Win \$250

Enter the UO Libraries'  
Digital Wallpaper  
Design Competition

Deadline May 19, 2015 5 pm

For more info: <http://library.uoregon.edu>

**O** UNIVERSITY OF OREGON Libraries



**Jason Stone, Writing Specialist****Creating Style Guides for Library Communications**

Years ago, when I was working in the greeting card industry, we had a saying: *Give somebody a fish and they will eat for a day. But teach them to fish and they'll spend the whole day telling you outrageous lies.*

This aphorism never quite dampened my zeal for promoting the DIY approach.

In getting our communications shop up and running in the UO Libraries, a big challenge we have faced is one of supply and demand. Simply put, there is more demand for our services than we can realistically provide, given our current staffing levels. It is unlikely that we will be adding significant FTE anytime soon. Therefore, we look for opportunities to help our library colleagues help themselves to be better communicators. By providing the right resources and training, we can empower the library staff to perform basic communications tasks with a higher degree of accuracy, efficacy, and confidence—and thereby free up more of our department's time for higher-level projects. It's a win for everyone.

One important tool for “teaching people to fish” is the style guide. A style guide, according to Wikipedia, “is a set of standards for the writing and design of documents.”

Since 1993 the UO has published a style guide targeted to the entire campus community, *How We Tell Our Story: Communications Standards for the University of Oregon* (<https://brand.uoregon.edu/editorial-style-guide>). It contains a wealth of information for those of us who are communications specialists. As an editor, I consult it regularly and I've memorized whole sections. But for most employees, I'm afraid it may represent too much of a deep dive: running to 150+ pages, the guide covers topics ranging from brand positioning to mailing specifications to proofreading marks. The picture only gets murkier when we take the experiences of our student staff into account. Journalism majors are used to working with the Associated Press (AP) style guide; students in the humanities and social sciences are most familiar with MLA style.

To help get everyone on the same page, we have developed a concise, one-stop style guide specifically for library communications. Ours is only a few pages long. It doesn't address everything—you'll still need to go to *How We Tell Our Story* (<http://tinyurl.com/z9whemj>) if you want information about UO athletics identity, Latin honors, en- versus em-dash usage, or the paper recycling policy—but our guide does offer a quick-start overview that can help library staffers get answers to their FAQs and avoid the most common mistakes. What's more, it offers guidance in cases that are library specific. *Should I capitalize “e-reserves” if it's the first word in a sentence? Is it too informal to say “stacks”? Is it overly formal to say “monographs”? Is it okay to refer to every library staffer as a “librarian”?* These are the types of questions that our guide addresses.

Our style sheet also offers quick reference resources for design and layout (color swatches, fonts, headers, logo usage), image selection and sourcing (stock photography, copyrights, image ratios and resolutions, model release form), accessibility considerations, and creating library research guides.

**Conclusion**

It's been a whirlwind of activity getting our library communications department up and running over the past two years! And judging from our conversations at the Amigos Library Services First Annual Library Marketing and Communications Conference last November,



we are not alone—the majority of attendees we spoke with came from libraries that have only recently added staff and resources in this vital area.

In the year to come, we are already looking ahead to a number of next steps and upcoming projects. We will be digging deeper into website and social media analytics, developing an e-newsletter to promote library services and resources to our teaching faculty, transitioning to in-house design and layout of our *Building Knowledge* donor publication, and further exploring the intersection of library user experience and communications outreach. In addition, we will be negotiating an evolving landscape in university communications. The trends on our campus are towards centralization, and we will be looking for ways to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration, networking, and resource sharing—without sacrificing the special advantages that accrue from our status as a department embedded within the academic unit we serve.

These are indeed exciting times to be working in library communications! 🐼



Creative shot from our summer 2015 #bookface social media campaign.

### Follow the University of Oregon Libraries on Social Media:

<https://www.facebook.com/uolibraries>

<https://twitter.com/uoregonlibnews>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/uolibrarieseugene>

<https://www.instagram.com/uolibraries/>



# Coordinating Diverse Public Programs in the Library

by **Tatiana Bryant**

*Special Collections Librarian,  
University of Oregon Libraries*

and

**Jonathan O. Cain**

*Librarian for Data Initiatives  
and Public Policy,  
Planning and Management,  
University of Oregon Libraries*

## Introduction

In spring of 2015, the University of Oregon Libraries (UO Libraries) co-sponsored a release event for the Urban League of Portland's *State of Black Oregon 2015 Report* to increase campus diversity initiatives and community engagement. The event inspired collaboration across the campus and state to bring together multiple university and community partners, including UO Libraries, the University of Oregon's Planning, Public Policy, and Management Program (PPPM), and the Urban League of Portland (ULPDX). Collaborations between libraries, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders highlight one aspect of the central role libraries serve as connectors in the local and regional communities. By co-sponsoring this event, UO Libraries furthered the University of Oregon's educational mission to promote public scholarship and civic engagement, support community development, and increase diversity through meaningful and thoughtful programs. This article will detail how this partnership materialized, from buy-in to execution, as well as recommendations for libraries interested in coordinating with local community-centered nonprofit organizations to develop opportunities for diverse public programs throughout Oregon.

## Finding Partners

UO Libraries is a natural partner for nonprofit organizations that deliver community-centered programming like the *State of Black Oregon* release event. UO Libraries is a strong collector of Oregon nonprofit organization information as well as a proponent at the university and beyond for distribution of new knowledge. The University of Oregon's PPPM program plays an active part in coordinating local and regional community planning and engagement, creating evidenced-based scholarship, and supporting Oregon nonprofit organizations. According to its website, the Urban League of Portland, a chapter of the National Urban League, was founded in 1945 and serves as "one of the oldest African American service, civil rights and advocacy organizations" in Oregon. (<http://ulpdx.org/>) Historically, the Portland chapter has focused on increasing social, economic, legal and political equity for communities of color in the state of Oregon. In 2015 the ULPDX released the second report in the *State of Black Oregon* series, which focuses on current economic, health, and social issues as well as outcomes and opportunities facing people of African descent in Oregon.

## The Importance of Diverse Public Programs

For the second edition of the *State of Black Oregon*, the ULPDX sought to expand outreach efforts throughout Oregon, outside of the usual Portland-metropolitan area and state capital region, in order to reach a wider population and generate more impact. Libraries are natural outreach partners for community-centered nonprofit organizations; they are no-cost natural distribution channels for information and scholarship about local, national and international issues affecting the public. The collaboration between the University of Oregon and ULPDX was initiated and coordinated by the authors, two librarians who felt it was imperative that the report release have a larger audience. Eugene, the second largest city in the state and the location of Oregon's flagship public university, was an ideal place to hold this event. As co-sponsors, UO Libraries and the UO PPPM program were able to provide gratis space and catering for the evening event. Both University of Oregon Libraries Dean Adriene Lim and Urban League of Portland President Nkenge Harmon Johnson provided introductory comments highlighting the importance of bringing the information in the *State of Black Oregon* to the public. Community leaders and University of Oregon scholars spoke about the re-



search methods, data collection, and analysis that generated the second edition of the report. ULPDX staff led a series of exercises to inspire community feedback and active discussion.

### Planning a Diverse Public Program

The key to coordinating diverse public programs is first to find or create the opportunity. Utilize resources like *The Foundation Center* website (<http://foundationcenter.org>) to find local and regional nonprofit organizations with diverse missions and perform outreach



## THE STATE OF BLACK OREGON REPORT: A Panel Discussion

Thursday, May 28, 2015  
6:30-8:00 p.m.  
Knight Library Browsing Room  
University of Oregon  
**Free and open to the public**

A panel of researchers, scholars, and community leaders will present and discuss findings of the 2015 State of Black Oregon Report, a key project of the Urban League of Portland.

The result of a two-year program of research, the 2015 State of Black Oregon provides an updated look at how Black Oregonians are doing—in schools, jobs, and both urban and rural communities throughout the state. The 200-page report features 18 essays from leaders throughout Oregon on issues including universal childcare, health equity, gentrification, and entrepreneurship. There are 21 case studies from across the state, from Medford in the south, to rural Pendleton in the east, to Astoria and the central gentrifying urban centers.



STATE OF BLACK OREGON  
JOIN THE MOVEMENT

 Urban League of Portland

Co-sponsored by the University of Oregon Libraries, the UO Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management, and the Urban League of Portland



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Libraries

PPPM  
Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management  
School of Architecture and Allied Arts



Urban League of Portland

An equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This publication will be made available in accessible formats upon request. Accommodations for people with disabilities will be provided if requested in advance by calling 541-346-3056.





by offering gratis space and marketing for new initiatives, publications, or strategic plans. Reach out and recruit campus or local partners by illustrating how this type of event aligns with the strategic goals of your institution or public service mission. Working with the resources at your disposal, acquire sponsors at your institution or within your community who can provide gratis space, childcare, and/or catering. No or low-cost tickets, food and accessible scheduling are crucial considerations for community-centered nonprofit organizations that hold public events interested in attracting a larger and economically diverse audience from the local and campus communities. Request the time needed to coordinate across distance; nonprofit organizations follow different calendars than academic, school, or public libraries. Establish a marketing plan to promote the event via social media channels, public notice boards, and local media outlets to encourage wide participation. Plan the event around the space available at an accessible time and find speakers who can provide relevant local context. Oftentimes the nonprofit organizations can identify and coordinate experts, scholars, and others in the local area who are knowledgeable about the organization, issues, and community. Let the nonprofit organizations drive the content and public participation at the event. Make sure to capture and archive the event to make it freely available online.

### Final Thoughts

Public programs that reflect diverse modes of thought, research, and discussion bring new users into the library and further solidifies the library as a community center. *The State of Black Oregon 2015 Report* release event at the University of Oregon served as both a catalyst for collaboration with a community-centered nonprofit and a successful method of outreach to local and campus communities. This event broadcast relevant research about diverse communities that was created in Oregon, for Oregonians. More information about the Urban League of Portland's State of Black Oregon Report can be found here:

[http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/state\\_black\\_oregon](http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/state_black_oregon) 



# The Role of Stories in Library Marketing and Communications

**by Clarissa Mansfield**

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University Libraries  
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CLARISSA MANSFIELD

Clarissa has been the Communications Manager for Western Washington University Libraries since 2013, and has fourteen years of experience working in academic libraries. This past November 2015, she was a presenter at the Library Marketing and Communications Conference held in Dallas, Texas, where she spoke about the value of sharing library stories based on examples from Western Libraries. She is an alumna of Western Washington University, with a B.A. in Humanities and M.Ed. in Environmental Education.

We in the library profession know that libraries offer a wide variety of services and resources to our communities and patrons, but despite the unique programs we host, the access we provide to print and online resources, special collections, and archival materials, or even research and writing assistance, finding proactive ways of effectively communicating this to our users can be challenging. Likewise, it is not uncommon for libraries to have to compete for financial support and human resources in an era of reduced funding and shrinking or flat base budgets. Combine these factors with increased pressures on resource access budgets due to journal inflation and the rising cost of subscriptions, and it is clear that we must find a way to effectively communicate the value of our libraries if we want to secure both the financial and philosophical support of our constituents.

It is no wonder that marketing and communications are becoming increasingly important to libraries, be they specialized, public, or academic. The recent Library Marketing and Communications conference held last November in Dallas, Texas, was one of the first devoted exclusively to this topic and generated enough support for conference organizers to consider making it an annual event. Interest in how libraries can utilize communication and marketing strategies in order to promote and ensure their longevity and success now seems more common than ever before.

Be that as it may, it is still not unusual to encounter people who bristle at the notion that libraries must “sell” their value to their patrons. Nor is it uncommon for those in the library profession to misunderstand what is meant by “marketing,” and instead focus on the execution of various disconnected events or tasks designed to address a number of perceived needs, which are based on assumptions rather than evidence. Subsequently, library marketing is often more reactive than proactive, centered more on promotions than strategy, (Lucas-Alfieri, 2015).

This approach often results in a series of disparate, un-coordinated, (albeit usually well-intentioned) efforts, and in the generation of a variety of activities which are difficult to assess or sustain. Often slightly more comfortable with terms like “outreach” than “marketing,” many librarians and library staff try to collectively address questions such as: “How can we



help people become aware of our services?” or “How can we garner financial or philosophical support from our constituents for the work we are doing?” without the aid of a cohesive strategic marketing and communications plan.

In considering these questions and in thinking about how to develop a marketing plan, it is helpful to conceptualize the work of our libraries in terms of library-related human interest stories. A compelling story that illustrates the impact of a program or service on a real person will always be more interesting than a list of facts or a collection of descriptive statements. I am reminded of the old adage creative writing students are often instructed to follow: “Show, don’t tell.” If we can show our constituents what matters most by sharing human interest stories that resonate with them, then we won’t need to worry about “telling” people why libraries are important or why they should care about what we have to offer; not only will they understand this, they will begin to share our stories themselves, because our stories *are their* stories.

For example, we could describe a special collection that is unique to our library, or we could tell the story of how that collection is being used in a class, how librarians are enhancing the teaching and learning in the classroom, and how this use enriches the students’ experiences. It is through this story that one possible mission-driven theme begins to emerge: the library as a partner in teaching and learning at our institution. If done well, this story can offer a platform for promoting both the collection and the role of the library in teaching and learning through our focus on user impacts, which allows us to get to the heart of what matters most. And the theme of this story could in turn point to additional potential stories that we can pursue and share in a number of different ways, whether in the form of articles, photo essays, social media posts, or some other format.



Students from WWU Librarian Paul Piper’s Spring 2015 Library 320 class, “Fly fishing in American Literature and Culture,” which explored both the sport and the art of fly fishing in American literature and culture, and considered the implications of fly fishing as a cultural phenomenon on gender, race, and environmental concerns by utilizing the fly fishing collection in Western Libraries Special Collections. After a student in the class mentioned that he had never actually done any fly fishing, Piper collaborated with two other professors to arrange a time for students to experience what it feels like to cast a flyrod.



Because we are intrinsically immersed inside the meaningful world of libraries, we are experiencing, witnessing, constructing and sharing these stories every day, whether we realize it or not. This means we can also choose to deliberately identify, develop and share these stories intentionally, in ways that express clear alignment with the missions and needs of our libraries. Not only will such stories resonate with people, they also offer us a framework for understanding all of our outreach and communication efforts, while simultaneously humanizing the “marketing” work we do. By using the stories of our patrons to reach our patrons, we can showcase our users, their needs, and what we are doing to meet them.

I argue that if we can commit to thinking and communicating in compelling narratives directly related to our institutional mission, we will also begin to recognize a cohesion that exists among all of our various efforts, which will allow us to build a foundation for crafting a strategic communications and marketing plan. And in doing so, we can prevent the proliferation of disconnected piecemeal marketing activities undertaken merely for the sake of doing “something” in the hopes that our return on investment is worth the effort. We can stop hosting events just to get people in the door without thinking about what happens once the event is over, and we can begin to understand how all of our events, services, spaces, collections, and various attributes that we are working to promote are part of a mission-driven cohesive whole with people at its core.

### **Marketing and Communications at Western Washington University Libraries**

Today’s library is dynamic, evolving, and inherently complex, often offering users more services, resources, and support than they realize. Western Libraries at Western Washington University is one example of such a multi-faceted, complex academic library. Comprised of numerous units, areas, divisions, collections, service points, initiatives, and programs, Western Libraries is also home to the University’s Learning Commons, which includes eight different program partners, (five of which are not managed by the Libraries), collectively constituting a uniquely complex and collaborative structure which provides an extensive array of services, benefits, and expertise to our students and our faculty.

Actively engaged in a wide variety of teaching and learning activities, Western Libraries is committed to supporting the needs of our students, our faculty, and our community of learners. Through offering access to customizable interactive workshops that utilize modern pedagogies, personalized collaborative instructional sessions involving multiple literacies, individualized research and writing support both for students and for faculty, specialized expertise in a variety of subject areas and disciplines, access to primary sources, archival materials, rare and special collections, and materials related speci-



Students studying in a workshop classroom, a space created to support interactive and collaborative learning.





cally to the Pacific Northwest, Western Libraries is committed to enhancing, supporting, and enriching teaching and learning at Western in essential, creative, and dynamic ways. As the Communications Manager for Western Libraries, I witness first-hand the tremendous impact we have on our patrons and our community. I also face the challenge of identifying how to best communicate this so that people will understand what we offer them and why they should care.

Ned Potter, author of *The Library Marketing Toolkit*, explains that library marketing is challenging for a number of reasons, not only because the public perception of what it is libraries actually do is frequently outdated, but also because of a prevalent misunderstanding on the part of library employees of what library marketing should be able to accomplish. He argues in favor of a strategic approach that involves the use of repeated messages across multiple formats to cultivate an awareness over the long-term of what libraries offer so that when our users eventually need something, they will automatically think of us, (Potter, 2013).

This kind of strategy takes time, planning, and coordination to develop and implement, but thinking in terms of library stories can help us begin that process. We can start by asking ourselves questions that will help us identify some of our primary communication needs:

- Are there patterns in our assessment data indicating a repeated expressed need for services we actually already offer? Meaning, is there something that we wish our users knew about of which they seem to be consistently unaware? Or maybe there are key services or collections that have potential widespread benefits that are being under-utilized?
- What are some of the things that make our library unique? Why should this matter to our patrons? How does this uniqueness benefit them?
- Who is most impacted by our work and what are some of those impacts? Again, why should this matter to our patrons?
- Are we launching a new initiative or offering a new service that we need people to know about?
- And lastly, we should consider how all of these questions and communications needs relate to our organizational strategic plan, and to the work we are doing every day. How can everything be unified holistically under our mission?

For example, the current mission statement of the Libraries at Western Washington University is: “Western Libraries connects—people to people, people to place, people to learning.” This statement succinctly encapsulates much of what we do, and it is both memorable and direct. But the statement by itself might not be enough to illustrate what we mean, and if we cannot adequately demonstrate how our mission is embodied in our work, we will not be able to think, act, or communicate strategically. That being said, we realize the theme of “connecting” offers us a structure for unifying all of our various activities, and have therefore decided to promote all of our regular events and exhibits under the umbrella of “Western Libraries Connections.”

This strategy has helped us articulate the purpose of each regular library-sponsored event and exhibit so that we can develop a clear expectation of what we hope they will







Heritage Resource Distinguished Speaker event featuring Professor Laura Laffrado, holding her book about Pacific Northwest Writer, Ella Higginson, standing next to Clarissa Mansfield, who is both Western Libraries Communications Manager and also Laffrado's former student.

accomplish, which, in turn, has enabled us to better understand how each activity is part of our mission. For example, everything we do involves connecting our speakers, our faculty, our students, or our audience to our collections, resources, and expertise. This means when we plan our events, we should clearly identify our goals, and also actively seek out co-sponsors from other academic disciplines and departments throughout the University, thereby cultivating opportunities for collaboration while demonstrating our centrality and versatility to the university as a whole.

Likewise, while we strive for excellence in the promotion of a collection, event, service, workshop, or other resource, we understand that our communications work does not end once the event is over or the new initiative or service has been announced and promoted. In fact, the story itself lies in showing how the event, service, collection, or resource impacted our users. We should not only offer those who attended our event a personalized story they can share with others, but we should also strive to extend our reach beyond our attendees to those who were not there.

### Best Practices When Crafting Library Stories

Once we identified two of the main mission-driven communication themes for Western Libraries, ("Western Libraries Connects," and "Western Libraries as partners in teaching and learning"), it was easy for us to see potential library stories that express these same themes everywhere we looked. In the process of crafting our stories, we also developed some storytelling "best practices," which are shared below:

- **Hook your audience early.**  
Whether you decide to construct your story as a long-form feature, a photo essay, a Facebook post, or a newsletter article, always try to front-load your content. Begin your story with what's most important, expressing early the thing that will hook your reader. Give your audience something that they will remember.
- **Use compelling images.**  
Always use photographs to illustrate your stories. Photographs can say much more than you can ever say with words, and can serve as another hook to inspire your reader to finish reading your story. When covering an event, always use photos from the event itself. They can capture the emotion of the event, and they are another way of expanding your story's reach. Not only can they help foster a sense of inclusion among those who attended your event, but they also place your patrons at the heart of the story and offer them a way to engage with you once the event has passed, (Bizzle, 2014).






Library Student Employees being honored at the Western Libraries' annual Student Celebration, Spring Quarter 2015.

- **Use the story-getting process as an opportunity for connection.**  
Understand that the process of capturing your story presents you with opportunities to connect directly with your constituents. Whether through the interview process or subsequent conversations during the development of your story, you can engage meaningfully with the people who will help you tell your story. Through listening to their words, you will better understand their perceptions, wants, and needs.
- **Remember that if you let them, people will tell your story for you.**  
Testimonials are effective and compelling quotes are often better received when they come from someone external to the library to whom your patrons can relate. Let your patrons help tell your stories. “Show, don’t tell” by directly involving the impacted people in your stories. Let their voices and personalities shine through by using their compelling quotes and images to bring their stories to life.
- **Maximize your stories’ reach.**  
Once you have your story, think about where and how to share it in order to maximize its reach. Identify your primary outlets for sharing and posting stories, whether it is through your website, on your social media platforms, in local newsletters, in journals, or via local media organizations. Explore all of your options and think about ways to re-purpose and share your compelling content. Always follow up with the people who helped you get your story, whether through e-mail, social media, or conversation. Share the links, reach out to your contacts via social media, and try to involve them in the sharing and re-sharing of the story.



### Concluding Thoughts

We should always remember it's the people who make the story. Marketing in libraries is about building community, and thinking in stories helps us identify and cultivate these relationships. We can communicate strategically about the value and impact of our libraries by using compelling stories that can be shared and re-shared, and this, in turn, will help us commit to what we value most. Having a strategic library marketing and communications plan with stories at its core will help us create cohesion among the many creative and innovative things we are doing which will help us prioritize where we put our energies and efforts.

The complex, evolving, 21st-century library is not just about books or resources; it's not just about our buildings and our spaces. Yes, these things are part of our story, but our true story, the story that really matters, is the story of its people. People create and need to use the resources we offer. The learning communities we support and make spaces for are made of people, and it's people who give us the unique collections that we preserve and share so that they can be used in innovative ways. And so when we think about the stories of our libraries, we need to focus on its people. Because our stories are their stories, and their stories are what will interest our community, our patrons, our students, our faculty, and our staff. Their stories are what people will remember. And their stories are what will elucidate the valuable and meaningful work we engage in every day. 

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# Learning as We Go:

## Communicating with Library Staff In the Digital Age

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**by Shawn Cunningham**  
*Director of Communications and  
Strategic Initiatives,  
Multnomah County Library*



SHAWN CUNNINGHAM

We all know that libraries are changing. Rapid transformations in how we share and consume information affect our lives as library workers, parents, partners and neighbors. The sheer volume of information that begs constant attention in our personal and professional lives can be overwhelming and difficult to manage.

### **The Information Problem**

At Multnomah County Library (as with libraries across Oregon, I suspect), we place a premium on having information as complete and as readily available as possible. Library staff love information. And sharing information is an important way we stay connected to each other and adaptive in serving our communities' changing needs. It's also essential that any healthy institution find effective ways to engage, inform and gather feedback from the staff members who make it go.

We rely heavily on e-mail, but the volume of information we send and receive can be daunting. And the way we've historically written staff communications—for print—is no longer relevant.

Recognizing that our library's internal communication practices haven't kept pace with changes in the world around us, Multnomah County Library created an internal communications specialist position to understand and address these issues. Since last fall, that person has been busy gathering input, listening to staff describe challenges and constraints, and looking for ways to help our library do a better job communicating to and with staff. We're still early in this process, but what we've learned is valuable. We can address some issues immediately, and others will take longer than we'd like.



## **What We've Learned So Far**

Every library is different, but there are some communications best practices used across professions that we can leverage. Below are few of the ideas we're trying out at Multnomah County Library. We're still learning, so we will assess and adjust as we hear from staff and try new things.

### **Make It Relevant**

We're all crunched for time, and it can be hard to make reading e-mail a priority when we have patrons to help, programs to implement and events to plan. At Multnomah County Library, half of our staff spend about 90 percent of their time serving patrons, away from their e-mail. That translates to less than an hour of computer time a day.

Web usability consultant Jakob Nielsen is just one of many to report that users may only read the first paragraph, or even just the first sentence of an online communication. So put the most important information first—an action, deadline or change—and save your context for a hyperlink. We use our employee intranet as a landing place for a lot of those contextual background documents. We're also working to improve the utility and usability of that resource.

### **Write for the Web**

As the world transitions from the printed word to the pixelated, how we read and understand information has changed. Writing with web principles in mind—keeping it concise and relevant—can improve comprehension and save time for staff who have hundreds of e-mails to read each week.

### **Leverage Your Subject Line**

If you're sending an e-mail, make your subject line deliberate. Think of it as a headline that needs to catch your reader's attention at a glance. Keep it clear and concise. Are there keywords, like "action" or "inform" you can use consistently to clue the reader in to the meaning? If there's a call to action or a deadline, be sure to include it in the subject line.

### **Use Plain Language**

Writing in business speak has become the default for many of us. Writing for the web is one step toward plain language. But there's more we can do. The Plain Language Action and Information Network ([www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov)) is a great resource to guide how we communicate. Plain language helps the reader scan quickly for meaning. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Write short sentences and paragraphs.
- Use short lists.
- Write in the active voice.
- Replace jargon with everyday words.

Plain language isn't designed to "dumb down" our writing. It's a way to get the information to our readers faster and more effectively.





### **Write for Your Audience**


It's easy to forget about what matters most to frontline staff, especially when you work on the administrative side. To help solve this, we can borrow a technique from our private sector marketing and communications counterparts: Tell your audience "what's in it for me." This can be as simple as highlighting a staff benefit or assuring your team that there won't be any job cuts.

### **Why It's Worth It**

Learning new skills and setting new processes into place takes time and energy. And with all the competing priorities libraries are facing today, why do employee communications matter? The changes outlined here can have a real impact on staff and culture. Creating communications that staff can read and understand quickly helps create a shared sense of organizational transparency, confidence and connection. Having higher and faster understanding of initiatives, procedures and actions frees up more time for what we love to do most: serve our patrons.

### **Learning Together**

Libraries are experiencing change from all sides, from patron demographics and needs to digital literacy and inclusion to staff recruitment. Navigating change can be scary, but the possibilities of our work keep us dedicated. While the digital landscape is still being carved out, we're willing to try things, fail, adjust and try again.

At Multnomah County Library, we're at the beginning of the learning process when it comes to structured internal communications. But we know the benefits are worth the journey. So as you write that next project plan or staff e-mail, I hope you'll find value in the ideas presented here, build on them, create better ones and share them. We're still learning too. 



# Creating Engaging Library Experiences through Effective Content Marketing

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Rajesh is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Library and Information Science at St. John's University, New York. His deep interest in management and libraries has led him to frequent interfacing with library leaders and research of the application of marketing and branding in library organizations. He teaches leadership and management courses and continues to actively pursue related research. His professional website is [www.lisrajesh.com](http://www.lisrajesh.com), and he can be reached at [singhr1@stjohns.edu](mailto:singhr1@stjohns.edu).

## Info about Rajesh's OLA 2014 Presentation:

*Rajesh gave a presentation entitled "Library Brand Advocacy: An Innovative Approach for Engaging the Community" at the 2014 OLA conference on "The Inside Out Library" in Salem. The presentation was focused on how libraries can position themselves by embracing the concept of brand advocacy within the context of the STEPPS (Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Values, and Stories) framework provided by Bergen (2013). By applying the STEPPS framework, libraries can better attract and engage the community. Real-world examples of innovative libraries illustrated how elements of the STEPPS framework could be successfully implemented.*

A cherished goal of libraries and information organizations has always been to engage the community. The digital revolution is ushering in new ways to deliver and combine services in the prevailing experience economy. In a recent study of more than 1,000 adults in the United States and the United Kingdom, researchers found that 81 percent of Millennials, 79 percent of Gen Xers, and 78 percent of Baby Boomers value experiences more than they do material items (Pally, 2013). Moreover, we have a fairly good idea of the methods customers are using to read, review, research and consume library services and programming.

However, the challenge is not how communities' information expectations are evolving—whether it is their preference for receiving information services via a library app, Twitter or Facebook—but to discover and manage what our communities value most and to transform their expectations into memorable and enriching experiences in physical and virtual environments. Can you imagine a future in the library and information science (LIS) profession where libraries are not judged by the size of collections and service offerings but rather by experiences? Well, it is already happening! This transformation calls for a shift in our marketing and communication approaches in order to provide robust and compelling library experiences to the communities we serve. In this article, I focus on how libraries and information organizations can create engaging experiences by embracing the SAVE (Solution, Access, Value and Education) framework and through effective content management.



## **Evolving Landscape of Marketing in the Experience Era**

The field of service marketing has come a long way, evolving from the 4Ps framework (McCarthy, 1975) to relationship marketing (Berry, 1983) and more recently, transitioning into experiential marketing in the experience economy (Pine II & Gilmore, 2011). The shift from products to experiences is obvious. Research shows that highly successful organizations are enhancing the value of their products and services by providing “total experience” (Arons, Driest, & Weed, 2014). Many libraries have gone through major transitions during the last decade in their goal to provide a total experience by adopting the bookstore model, redefining their ambiance, learning spaces, roles, responsibilities, functions, and embracing creative strategies to engage communities. Drucker’s profound statement that “the purpose of business is to create a customer” remains as relevant today as it was many decades ago. In fact, the advent of experience economy is forcing organizations to move beyond simply creating a customer to evolving a customer. Many organizations are responding to this call by investing enormous resources in managing their content in a strategic way in order to grab and hold the attention of today’s technologically sophisticated, well-informed and knowledgeable customers. Libraries are no exception to this phenomenon and will benefit greatly by adapting their marketing and communication approaches to create unique, impactful and differentiating content-driven experiences in order to inform, entertain, engage and evolve the customer (Rose & Johnson, 2015).

## **Content-Driven Marketing**

The revolution in information and communication technology has given people enormous capabilities to seek, gather, publish and distribute content and experiences in unprecedented ways. Given today’s ease with which information can be digitally published and shared, most libraries have jumped on the bandwagon by providing large amounts of information targeted toward their communities. Yet without a proper strategy, this kind of information can easily bewilder and disengage customers from our service offerings, and ultimately from our library brand. The solution is simple: Provide relevant and engaging content across different distribution channels in an effective and strategic way to tell your library story.

The idea of providing education, recreation and general usefulness through effective content management provides a new and powerful way to enrich interactions with customers at every stage of their library journey. This approach calls for a shift in libraries’ traditional marketing approach—that create content only to inform and describe the value of their services and programming—into one that knows how to create, manage, and lead the development of valuable experiences (Rose & Johnson, 2015). The SAVE framework proposed by Ettenson, Conrado and Knowles (2013) can be more useful for libraries in setting the stage to create engaging experiences through effective content creation.

## **The SAVE Framework**

The SAVE framework looks beyond the 4Ps model (product, place, price and promotion) and focuses on:

**Solution** instead of product. Define program and service offerings by the needs they meet in their pursuit of improving society through facilitating knowledge creation (Lankes, 2011).



**Access** instead of place. Develop an integrated cross-channel presence that fits customers' entire library experience journey, instead of individual service encounter in physical or virtual environments.

**Value** instead of price. Talk about the benefits communities derive from libraries in the ease of accessibility to resources, time and money saved, fulfillment of their informational, cultural, recreational, educational and professional goals, and so forth.

**Education** instead of promotion. Provide information relevant to specific needs at each library touch point, rather than relying on generic advertising and public relations. Many libraries are already doing a good job by educating communities through various services including, but not limited to, story hours, cooking lessons, immigration services, bicycle checkout, and other educational, cultural, and recreational programs.

### Creating Engaging Content Experiences

Rose & Johnson (2015) suggest an interesting and novel approach to creating robust, compelling, meaningful and engaging content-driven library experiences by creating four archetypes of contents:

#### The Promoter

Promoter content is the content we are most familiar with. The promoter content sets the stage for initiating a conversation with the community. The purpose of the promoter content is to satisfy customers' information needs and wants and persuade customers to consume library resources. How can libraries create this type of content? Actually, we create this type of content every day. Some examples include, but are not limited to, our websites, brochures, information about library events, programs, story hours and so forth. This is the content we create to describe the value of our products and services—and propagate it through all the different channels we manage, including the Internet, mobile, social, physical and virtual space. For instance, Chattanooga Public Library promotes the value and uniqueness of its fourth floor in an interesting way by stating "While traditional library services support the consumption of knowledge by offering access to media, the 4th floor is unique by offering access to tools and instruction" (<http://chattlibrary.org/content/4th-floor/about-4th-floor>). Similarly, the Inspiration Lab at Vancouver Public Library sparks a conversation with its community by highlighting the resources it has about digital creativity, storytelling featuring high-performance computers, analog-to-digital conversion, sound studios, and self-publishing and editing software, and benefits they provide to the community (<http://www.vpl.ca/programs/cat/C1051/>). This type of content may be structured as a library story to persuade the community to not only utilize our resources, but also to invite them to become co-partners in designing content and spark a meaningful conversation in a mutually beneficial relationship that furthers the mission of the library.

#### The Preacher

Preacher content evangelizes remarkable ideas. How can libraries create content that will drive discovery and awareness in their communities? We develop this content to attract new customers. Its purpose to be easily accessible and promote a larger idea





in an easy-to-consume way. For example, for years libraries have prided themselves on making a host of items available to the public: books, DVDs, compact discs, and computers. And, now the Winter Public Library in Florida has started checking out bicycles to the public since February 2014. This program is called “Checkout Bikes” (<http://archive.wpppl.org/info/checkout-bikes.html>). On the date it was officially unveiled, a crowd gathered at the front entrance of the library to check out the new bicycles that were available. People can easily see the practical value to this service as it is a healthy initiative—it is all about encouraging people to be more active. This example shows how preacher content may be instrumental in driving awareness and engagement in the community. Halligan and Shah (2014) also suggest that the rules of marketing have changed, and the key is to stand out by becoming remarkable, unique and useful to the community.

### The Professor

Professor content fuels and enriches the interests and passions of your community. The most important purposes of the professor content are to drive meaning and provide solutions to your customers’ evolving information expectations. It establishes us as an authority within our community and engenders trust that our expertise as librarians makes a difference in customers’ lives. This type of content is considered unique and valuable in communicating the unique value proposition of the library. This means that more attention, creativity and effort will be required in crafting this type of content. One way to do that is to position your library as a thought leader or authority in the area of your strengths—and, in that capacity, educate your community about what unique things you offer in your library and how relentlessly you strive to make a difference in their lives. For instance, the Howard County Library System (HCLS) in Maryland positions itself as a central component of the very strong public education system it serves in its community. The HCLS rebranded itself from merely being a community service to an educational organization, which helps people in their learning endeavors. The HCLS developed “the three pillars” education philosophy, with each pillar representing a distinct, equally important curriculum segment: self-directed education, research assistance and instruction and instructive and enlightening experiences (<http://hclibrary.org/about-us/welcome/>). The marketing approach of HCLS clearly positions libraries as educational institutions and librarians as educators and can easily help people see the timelessness, practical value and uniqueness of their library services.


### The Poet

Poet content drives feelings and beliefs in our community. It aims to make our community feel differently and focuses on changing a belief about a particular thing. How can libraries create content that will get people more emotionally connected with the libraries’ mission and services? Examples include any type of content that appeals to the pure emotions of our community whether it is inviting them to share their library stories with us or organizing a community event. We are looking to make them laugh, shout, cry, or feel some emotion that aligns with our library story or purpose. For instance, when Edmonton Public Library rebranded itself they embraced the role of community activator with the help of their exciting, engaging, and emotional campaign messages, such as: “I’m an information ninja,” “We make geek chic,” “I’m happy and I know it,” and “Spread the



words” (Thomas, 2011, p.113). Similarly, Queens Library in New York City emphasizes the importance of four strategic themes: powerful people, powerful programs, powerful partners, and powerful places in its most recent strategic plan. Moreover, it prominently highlights how customer and staff engagement sets the stage for memorable library experiences ([http://www.queenslibrary.org/sites/default/files/about-us/ALL\\_NEW.pdf](http://www.queenslibrary.org/sites/default/files/about-us/ALL_NEW.pdf)). Such messages are funny, poignant, emotional, inspirational and can be used effectively for telling your library story. The poet content is most often associated with telling the story of the library, and more importantly, its approach to creating unique and engaging experiences for customers. However, it needs to be remembered that all of the content types discussed above should be designed and created in an integrated way to be able to contribute to the story of the library.

### Communicate Your Difference

Understanding and categorizing content by type will not only improve libraries’ effectiveness, but it also helps us communicate and differentiate our library story in a strategic way. If you prefer defining four content archetypes differently to suit your work environment, do so. The bottom line is: We must create meaningful content-driven experiences! We not only have to grab the attention of our communities that matter to us, but we also have to hold it long enough so that we matter to them. Now is the time to share our unique and compelling library story by cutting through the clutter and managing content in an effective way by demonstrating how we make differences in patrons lives every day. This is an incredibly exciting time to be in the LIS profession. We are in the midst of redefining our role from merely being librarians to becoming difference makers who evolve librarianship. Our profession has a vital role and responsibility to drive and shape the information expectations of the communities we serve, and, ultimately, to create experiences that woo and capture their attention. Let’s make those experiences remarkable by creating remarkable content! 

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# OLA Quarterly Publication Schedule 2016

The *OLA Quarterly (OLAQ)* is the official publication of the Oregon Library Association. The *OLAQ* is indexed by *Library Literature & Information Science* and *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts*. To view PDFs of issues, visit the OLAQ Archive on the OLA website. Full text is also available through H.W. Wilson's *Library Literature and Information Science Full Text* and EBSCO Publishing's *Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA) with Full Text*.

Each issue is developed around a theme determined by the Communications Committee and Guest Editor(s). To suggest future topics for the *OLA Quarterly*, or to volunteer/nominate a Guest Editor, contact the OLAQ Coordinator.

Vol./No.	Theme	Deadline	Pub. Date	Guest Editor
Vol 22 • No. 1 Spring 2016	<i>Access Services in the New Century</i>	April 15, 2016	TBA	Turner Masland, Portland State University

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